

## Discussion of Findings

**Finding 1.** Field trials interfere with hunting at some Fish and Wildlife Areas in Indiana.

The present State regulations permit bird dog and rabbit dog field trials on Fish and Wildlife Management Areas from February 1 to April 30 and from August 15 to late October or early November (the weekend prior to opening of the regular upland game season). Retriever and versatile dog field trials are permitted from February 1 to late October or early November . They are not permitted beyond the weekend prior to the opening of the regular upland game season which starts in early November. Also no field trials are allowed during the spring turkey hunting season at Glendale, Winamac and Pigeon River Fish and Wildlife Areas.

Given the above regulations, field trials conducted during the dates specified above interfere with the following hunting seasons for commonly hunted species (dates used are from the 1999-2000 hunting seasons).

Fox & Gray Squirrel	August 15 -December 31
Canada Goose - early season	September 1 - 15
Mourning Dove	September 1 - October 16
Teal - early season	September 4 - 19
Deer - early archery	October 1 - November 28
Rabbit	October 1 - January 31
Woodcock	October 8 - November 21
Ducks - north	October 16 - December 5
Canada Goose - north	October 16 - 18
Canada Goose - south	October 23 - 25
Ducks - south	October 23 - 29

Thus, in regard to the above finding, the Fish and Wildlife Service and the State are not in compliance with Section 1 of the Wildlife Restoration Act, 50CFR80.13, 50CFR80.14,50CFR80.18, 43CFR12.71(b), 521FW1.6, 522FW6.2, 522FW6.7, and legal grant documents.

At least in 1999, there were no field tests scheduled during the fall season so there was no interference with hunting seasons. Our observations indicated that the spring field test participants were hunter/dog owners who were engaged in field tests to improve the skills of their hunting dogs, which were presumably being used for hunting during the hunting season, in contrast to dogs under professional trainers which are usually competing in field trials during the hunting season.

**Finding 2.** Field trials interfere with wildlife viewing, shooting range use, and fishing on some Fish and Wildlife Areas in Indiana.

The present State regulations allow bird dog field trials on Fish and Wildlife Areas from February 1 - April 30. These dates overlap with the period of spring bird migrations and spring activity by non-migrating birds and mammals. These migrations and spring activity combined with the absence of heavy leaf cover make spring an excellent time for viewing wildlife. However, field trial activity by participants, vehicles, dogs, and horses become the dominant presence at the areas while field trials are being conducted. This includes much barking by dogs, continuous shouting to control dogs, whistle blowing to control dogs, and shooting of blank or live shells. Dogs and horse mounted judges, trainers, handlers, and observers cover large areas of terrain. This dominant presence does not meet most visitors expectations for a fish and wildlife area. It interferes with wildlife viewing and intimidates people from trying to observe wildlife while field trials are being conducted.

Some shooting ranges are closed during field trials because of their proximity to field trial courses. This precludes their use by archers or shooters.

Some fishing ponds are used for retriever trials thus displacing anglers resulting in lost angling opportunities.



**Some shooting ranges are closed during field trials precluding their use by archers or shooters.**

Thus, in regard to the above finding, the Fish and Wildlife Service and the State are not in compliance with Section 1 of the Wildlife Restoration Act, 50CFR80.13, 50CFR80.14, 50CFR80.18, 43CFR12.71(b), 521FW1.6, 522FW6.2, 522FW6.7, and legal grant documents.

**Finding 3.** Some lands purchased, developed, and /or managed with Federal Aid funds in Indiana are no longer serving their approved purpose.

Field trial support facilities such as clubhouses, horse barns, bird pens, parking lots, access roads, cooking and eating facilities, sanitary facilities, and water sources now occupy land that is no longer providing wildlife habitat or hunting opportunities. These facilities do not serve a grant related purpose. Additional areas are mowed and managed as areas to park campers, horse trailers, dog trailers, and stake out dogs. Trails are located throughout the areas and are primarily used by field trial participants during trials.



**Field trial clubhouse and parking area. Field trial facilities occupy land that is no longer providing wildlife habitat and hunting opportunities or serving a grant related purpose.**





**Field trial barns and parking areas. Field trial facilities occupy land that is no longer providing wildlife habitat and hunting opportunities or serving a grant related purpose.**



**Dogs staked outside horse barn.**



**Interior of horse barn.**